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Representative Larry Springer

2006 Session Preview

Dear Neighbors,

Best wishes for a healthy, peaceful and prosperous 2006.

Serving as your representative in Olympia has been a gratifying, frustrating, enlightening, but mostly proud experience. By all accounts, we accomplished a great deal during the 2005 session. Some things you will agree with and no doubt some things you will not. What is more important than agreeing or disagreeing is that we keep talking, so please, never hesitate to contact me anytime.

In this update I would like to share some highlights from last session and important issues we are dealing with this session.

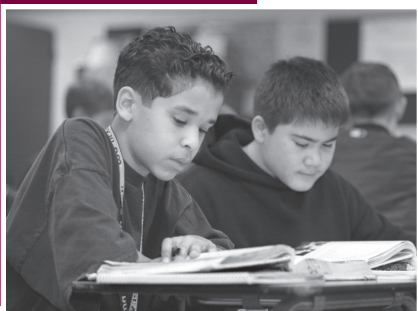
Sincerely,

Larry Springer
State Representative
45th Legislative District



This past year in the rear view mirror

- ✓ **Education:** Overall, the 2005 Legislature increased state funding for Washington's public schools by \$981 million – about \$468 per student, arguably the best education year in state history.
- ✓ **Health care:** We passed legislation that will provide health care for an additional 38,750 uninsured children as well as prescription drug relief for seniors that will save taxpayers over \$100 million.
- ✓ **Jobs:** I helped sponsored legislation to create the Job Development Fund which provides grants to cities, towns and other government entities for projects that create local jobs, stimulate economic development, and promote community growth.
- ✓ **Helping our Soldiers:** We granted property tax relief for widows and widowers of honorably discharged veterans as well as property tax exemptions for those who are disabled in combat.
- ✓ **Fighting Meth:** A new law restricts access to the cold and allergy medications used to "cook" meth. A similar law in Oklahoma reduced meth lab incidents by 80 percent.



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What's up for this year?



Home Security Fund

Our region's booming housing market has generated additional revenue for the State—funds needed to pay for additional case loads in education, repay borrowed money from pension funds, and importantly replenish the depleted "rainy day" savings account.

However, an unfortunate side effect of rising home costs is the inability of more than 405,000 Washington households to have a decent, safe and affordable place to live. Over 51,000 individuals are homeless and over 50,000 households are on waiting lists for public housing authorities. I am proud to sponsor the Home Security Fund (HB 2418) which invests a portion of the additional revenue in affordable housing throughout Washington. This legislation is a sound investment for our children and the future of our state. We will invest in housing for migrant farm workers, developmentally disabled, domestic violence victims, provide low income families with home weatherization services, and help with mobile home park preservation to name a few beneficiaries of the bill.

Protecting Your Property

This year I am sponsoring legislation that further clarifies Washington State law that prohibits the use of eminent domain to seize private property for private interests. The recent Supreme Court Kelo decision in Connecticut gave each state the right to decide how far the right of eminent domain can go. Property owners should never have to fear that their private land will be seized for another's private profit.



Ensuring Warm Homes

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina the Federal Energy Information Administration predicts that consumers can expect to spend anywhere from 50 to 70 percent more in energy costs this winter depending on where you live. The Federal Government as a result of recent budget cuts under funded an important government program known as the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

This cut could leave thousands of Washington's elderly and needy families without heat this winter. I am sponsoring legislation to fund a one time investment that increases this energy assistance fund by \$7.6 million. No one deserves to go cold this winter.



Improving Education

Last year the legislature created Washington Learns, an 18-month comprehensive education study to take a tough look at our state's education system. It examined our system from pre-kindergarten, the K-12 program, and higher education. The program brought together educators, business leaders, community advocates and administrative officials who came up with recommendations we will consider this session such as:

- ✓ Ways to assure our children are ready to learn when they enter Kindergarten. The statistics for children not prepared to learn are staggering!
- ✓ Working on alternatives to the WASL so that children who do not test well will not automatically fail to graduate.
- ✓ Ways to ensure that our high schools are preparing students for the workforce as well as college. Of particular importance is how to get our students to adequate math levels.



Energy Assistance

Last year gas cost about \$2/gallon. It eventually reached upwards of \$3 which substantially increased operating costs for state and municipal vehicles, not to mention the burden it placed on school district bus fleets. We are looking for alternative ways our state can increase our energy independence by:

- ✓ Giving incentives for citizens, businesses and governments to use hybrid vehicles and cleaner fuels like biodiesel and biogas (ethanol);
- ✓ Jump-starting a local market for biodiesel and biogas so our local farmers benefit; and
- ✓ Passing reforms to encourage clean, cheap, renewable power like wind and solar.

We know this technology works. It is time for Washington to do its part.

Sex Predator Laws

The horrific events of this past year involving crimes by sexual predators has once again focused legislative attention on the issue, much like it did in 2001. This is a very difficult problem to deal with because it is so volatile and emotional with unimaginable grief by the victims and their families. My fervent hope is that the legislature will avoid letting the issue become a political wedge issue between the two parties. Clearly nothing would be served in that event.

There are many bills just beginning their way through the House committees. I have signed onto 5 bills as a co-sponsor. It is critical for the legislature to fully vet, discuss, and debate these bills in order to arrive at an effective package of laws which gives us the greatest opportunity to protect our children and families from these heinous crimes.

As emotional as the topic is, it requires a deliberative process in order to get it right. Stay tuned as this issue progresses.

Health care

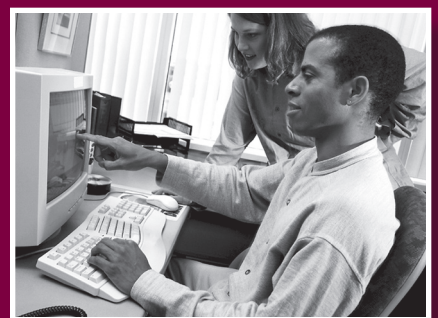
As a small business owner I know the importance of lowering our health care costs. This year we are focused on covering children and making health care more affordable.



- ✓ **Cover all Kids (2010):** I will continue my commitment to get all the children of Washington State health care coverage. This does not mean that they will all be covered by the state. We will propose ways to help businesses offer reasonable and affordable health plans to their employees and families.



- ✓ **Purchasing for quality/other efficiencies:** Like the efforts we made in previous sessions to save Washington millions in health care costs by purchasing prescription drugs in bulk, we will examine other means to save the state and taxpayers money on our Basic Health Plan by making smart buying decisions.



- ✓ **Small business premium sharing:** Small businesses do not have the buying power to bargain lower rates with healthcare providers. We will be looking at ways to help them pool together to help drive down premium costs.

